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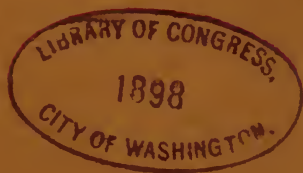
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Henryk Sienkiewicz.

The author of "Quo Vadis."



BOSTON:
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.
1898.

HANIA. Translated from the Polish of Henryk Sienkiewicz, author of "With Fire and Sword," "The Deluge," "Quo Vadis," etc., by Jeremiah Curtin. With portrait. Crown 8vo. Cloth. \$2.00.

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HANIA, the new volume by Henryk Sienkiewicz, has been carefully translated from the Polish by Jeremiah Curtin, whose translations of "Quo Vadis," "With Fire and Sword," and the other writings of Sienkiewicz, have been so highly commended for their spirit and faithfulness by scholars and critics throughout the country. It is uniform in size and binding with Mr. Curtin's translations of "Quo Vadis" and other books by Sienkiewicz, and contains a portrait of the author and his daughter, reproduced in photogravure from a photograph taken last summer in the Carpathian Mountains. The volume comprises over 500 pages, about one third being occupied by the story which gives the book its title, "Hania." It is a story of strength and tenderness and powerful characterization, its scene being laid in Poland. In addition to "Hania," the volume includes the author's latest story, "On the Bright Shore," a romance of Monte Carlo; a philosophical religious story of the crucifixion entitled "Let Us Follow Him," which suggested to Sienkiewicz the idea of writing "Quo Vadis"; a sketch entitled "Tartar Captivity," the germ of "With Fire and Sword," and the other volumes of the great historical trilogy; a humorous novelette entitled "That Third Woman," etc.

The new book by the distinguished Polish writer is of great interest and power, and will doubtless have a wide sale. With the volumes previously issued it gives in a series of admirable translations a practically complete set of the novels and romances of Sienkiewicz.

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Henryk Sienkiewicz.

IN an age when of making books there is no end, when mere cleverness is often a drug upon the literary market, at rare intervals there has appeared in the world of letters, unheralded by any trumpet-blast of fame, a personality marked and unique, whose genius and merits are of so transcendent an order that they dominate literature, and without effort or self-seeking win for themselves foremost rank in the great republic of letters.

Such a personality is Henryk Sienkiewicz. It is seven years since the first work in his now celebrated Trilogy of historical romances was offered to the American public.¹ Its translator was as modest as its author; and though the work is in some respects a greater one than "*Quo Vadis*," it did not win that immediate popularity which the Neroic romance has achieved. Beyond an able review here and there, the book did not excite comment in any great degree, or awake a marked amount of curiosity with regard to its author. This is not hard to understand, when we remember that it requires a somewhat cosmopolitan taste to appreciate a Polish epic of

¹ "*With Fire and Sword*." An Historical Novel of Poland and Russia. By Henryk Sienkiewicz. Translated from the Polish by Jeremiah Curtin. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company.

"*The Deluge*." An Historical Novel of Poland, Sweden, and Russia. By Henryk Sienkiewicz. A sequel to "*With Fire and Sword*." Translated from the Polish by Jeremiah Curtin. 2 vols. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company.

"*Pan Michael*." An Historical Novel of Poland, Russia, the Ukraine, and Turkey. By Henryk Sienkiewicz. A sequel to "*With Fire and Sword*" and "*The Deluge*." Translated by Jeremiah Curtin. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company.

the seventeenth century! The mere fact that the Trilogy was Polish in sentiment, that Polish knights with formidable Slavic names and titles were its heroes, — this in itself has often proved sufficient to intimidate and dissuade the intelligent reader. Those, however, who have read “With Fire and Sword,” and have with interest followed its brave knights and fair women through “The Deluge,” and have rejoiced and laughed and sorrowed with Pan Michael and his Basia until the last tragic scene, when the curtain falls and the great soul of the little knight ascends to God, — readers of “Pan Michael” need not be told that Henryk Sienkiewicz is quite as great as Scott or Dumas, while in depth of tragic feeling he has excelled them. To a love of the chivalric and historic as strong as Scott’s, to humor as delicious and keen as that of Dumas, he adds a third quality at times, — a spirituality so vast and tender and deep that it seizes the soul and bears it heavenward. It is this exaltation of thought which wins for Sienkiewicz a nobler niche in the Temple of Fame than belongs to those who merely amuse and instruct. If this praise seem extravagant, let the reader turn to those last pages of “Pan Michael,” and compare them with any elegiac ever written; the praise will justify itself.

Yet it is to the readers of “Quo Vadis” that the name of Henryk Sienkiewicz appeals most strongly. A work which has impressed the reading public as lastingly as this creates something more than a mere passing interest in its author; behind such a work one strives to see the man himself, his environment, tendencies, characteristics. And while mere personalities in literature are often of most trivial and ephemeral value, especially when they relate to a living writer, it surely is no worthless task to endeavor to discover in the works of a great contemporary the *man*, as he relates himself to life and art, to every phase and problem of modern thought and feeling.

To do this it is not necessary to descend to personalities or to possess in great detail the incidents of his life, but, knowing the general outline, to note how this relates itself harmoniously

to the great background of life, — at times allowing the imagination the liberty of filling in the meagre outline, giving it light and color.

An artist, whether painter, sculptor, poet, musician, or writer of romance, is after all a mental picture, — a most composite picture of various tendencies, traditions of religion and art, race-conditions and environment. Through these conditions, and sometimes even in spite of them, his individuality, his distinctive genius, must work and assert itself. And it is with these facts of his life rather than its mere detail that the biographer or student must concern himself if he would understand the man, his message to others, and its value.

Delightful as it is to listen to all the little personal chronicles of every-day life, to know minutely and exactly how many brain-tickings and heart-throbs are needed to produce such a work as "*Quo Vadis*," to know how many sleepless days and nights went to make the perfect picture, the faultless statue, the divine symphony, — yet we might know all these things and still the personality of the man might elude us.

In speaking of Sienkiewicz we shall deal merely with those general facts which relate to his work and genius rather than with those belonging to his own personal history.

And perhaps more eloquent than many a printed page is the face of Sienkiewicz as it looks at us in the first volume of "*The Deluge*." It is the face of a thinker, of a man who has lived deep, felt deep, loved and joyed and suffered. It is peculiarly an artist's face, stamped with the fine sensitiveness of temperament that belongs to such. The gaze is kindly, yet sad. There is nothing of that exuberance of gayety which shines in the countenance of Dumas Père, or of the gentle, genial good-humor that speaks from Sir Walter's kindly visage. It is the face of a poet, of a cosmopolitan Hamlet of the nineteenth century, of a man who has travelled much in distant lands, is equally at home in the Orient or the Occident, but has remained always of the Poles, Polish even to the fine finger-tips.

Turn from the picture to the writer. What is the source of

his hold upon his own countrymen and the reading-public everywhere?

If from the many characteristics of his work we could name but two, those two would stamp him at once as a great artist: they are the splendid vitality of his creations, and the sincerity and breadth of purpose which have marked all his work from first to last.

At the age of thirty-six Sienkiewicz was comparatively unknown, and apparently content to be. When many a younger man would have written himself out, Sienkiewicz was still preparing for his best work. His genius has ripened slowly, *ohne Hast, ohne Rast*, apparently undisturbed by the pressure of circumstances, the treacherous and glittering quicksands that have swallowed up many an able young writer. He has never turned aside even for a moment, seduced by "that last infirmity of noble mind." His genius shows an orderly, healthy development, undisturbed by outer influences, bearing no evidence of any other pressure than the fine inner compulsion. When he writes, it is because he has something to say which he can say, which must be said. He utters convictions and positive knowledge. He adopts fiction as the fittest vehicle for his thought; but it is never fiction purely for fiction's sake he gives us, consequently his work is something more than pure fiction. Whether he touches upon some problem of art or religion or modern ethics, whether he deals with the history of a past epoch or the archæological details of the first century, he has mastered his subject as far as human knowledge can master it, and is able to touch and transfigure it with some new light. Whatever the nation or the era of which he writes, he is quick to discern that "tide in the affairs of men which taken at the flood leads on to fortune;" and having discerned that great onward movement of mankind, he creates figures built upon so large and heroic a plan that they breast undaunted the very crest of the great wave of life that passes before us.

And what he writes is given with absolute freedom from self-consciousness, a lucid grasp of his subject, an easy mas-

tery of its details which come only when a great creative artist has lived so completely in his creations that they actually exist for him.

Readers of Goethe will remember how he himself, the seemingly cold and impassive Olympian, writes Charlotte Stein that he was at one time so absorbed in the thought of his own tragic creation, Mignon, that more than once he burst into tears, thinking of her.

We cannot help thinking that Henryk Sienkiewicz must at times become as completely absorbed in his work as was the author of "Wilhelm Meister."

Is it Petronius Arbiter elegantiarum he desires to introduce to us? Then rest assured he has dwelt with that enlightened pagan for many a day; he knows the Satyricon as well as did any Roman of them all in the first century; he knows his Tacitus better than we do; his feet have passed a thousand times over the ancient Roman haunts with Petronius; watched the play of every rainbow tint upon his Myrrhene vase; the odor of violets floats up to him from the garden of Petronius even while he writes; and somewhere in its shades flitting to and fro like a ghostly, belated butterfly, he has sighted the white-armed, golden-haired Eunice!

Nowhere does he describe Roman life and history as though he were a Pole, a passive spectator; he writes of things Roman as any Roman of them all in the first century might have written. It is this vividness of his art which almost misleads us into believing that his characters must be imaginary rather than historic personages. Only a very great genius can unearth thus the dusty chronicles of past centuries, and make its men and women live and breathe and speak to us. These historic characters are not mere shadows of the past, puppets or nullities, but very real men and women. If they have prompter or cue, we can discover neither; there is, perhaps, no living artist who has succeeded more completely than Sienkiewicz has done in eliminating self from the terms of that equation which exists between a man's life and his art.

In an age when so much of contemporary literature con-

tents itself with the mere chronicling of trivialities, when so much innocent paper is defaced by those who merely seek to hide behind the tangled brushwood of words a too obvious poverty of ideas, how does it happen that work as fine and strong and sincere as that of the great Polish novelist has grown so gradually into favor?

In literature, the local, the timely, and the ephemeral win passing popularity, and achieve instant success; the greater the work, the more slowly, in general, does it find its public. The merely frothy floats upon the surface of things because of its inherent lightness; great ideas sink deep, ferment slowly, and work their way upwards to the surface. The trivial and commonplace in literature and art finds a ready audience at every street corner; thoughts of deep and permanent worth demand a richer soil, a public of ripened taste and enlightened judgment.

“Was glänzt wird für den Augenblick geboren,
Das Echte bleibt der Nachwelt unverloren!”¹

Moreover, a sort of intellectual myopia — we dare not call it prejudice — must always obscure somewhat our view of the greatest of our contemporaries. Time alone adjusts the focus that enables us to see them as they are.

Even so able and so just a critic as Mr. Edmund Gosse, in a review upon the writings of Sienkiewicz, informs us that he can pronounce no opinion upon “*Quo Vadis*,” because he cannot take time to read it!

He uses more than six pages of space to tell us what he does *not* know about the *Trilogy*, when he might have dismissed it as he does “*Quo Vadis*,” by stating with equal truth and frankness that he has not read the work he criticises. He prefaces his criticism of “*The Deluge*,” by stating that Pan Michael takes the principal rôle! — an ignorance of fact which at once indicates that the critic did not read “*The Deluge*.” The impartial student of critical literature naturally asks,

¹ Mere tinsel glitters for a day; the True
Tempts after-times to rapture ever-new!

"Why take time and space to review a work which the critic has not read?" An art critic rarely passes upon the merits of a picture he has never seen!

Mr. Gosse objects to the Polish novels because there are *Polish* names in them, and because they deal with *Polish* history. With equal wisdom might a French critic object to Shakespeare's plays because they contain words unpronounceable for a Frenchman! Such statements may be humorous, but they are not critical!

If the author of "Quo Vadis" and "The Deluge" were an Elizabethan, we may be sure that Mr. Gosse would have read the writer whom he criticises; but as Sienkiewicz is a contemporary and a Pole, "Life is too short," Mr. Gosse tells us, — he cannot take time to read him!

If even enlightened critics in the Contemporary Review write a criticism from this standpoint, what must we expect from the Illiterati?

And as any reader, save the Pole, must read Sienkiewicz through the medium of a translation, there would seem to be, at first sight, an additional difficulty in the way of understanding him. In this connection a few words concerning Mr. Curtin's fine, strong translations of Sienkiewicz. Never, perhaps, in the history of letters was a work undertaken which has been more absolutely a labor of love.

To translate any author, whether poet, dramatist, or romancer, there must exist a certain subtle sympathy between the interpreter and the writer; if this does not exist, the task of translation is merely labor lost. An English reader of Shakespeare in a French translation knows how well-nigh impossible it is to read a page without smiling.

And when the task is that of translating a Polish epic into equivalent English, the ultimate success of the undertaking might seem at first questionable; for, considering the Polish language itself, with its wealth of idiom, its world of distinctions, shades of expression, scarcely known to English, French, or German, its power of condensation, its highly inflected verb-forms, Latinisms, Germanisms, and Gallicisms, he must indeed

be a remarkable linguist who would not look aghast at the mere thought of attempting to translate Mr. Sienkiewicz into English. And when we consider the length of the Trilogy, we can understand that the task his translator had to face required energy and abilities of an exceptional order.

And Mr. Curtin is no ordinary translator, — he is not merely an extraordinary linguist, but a man at home in any part of the world. He is familiar not merely with the idiom of the Slavic tongue as written, but also with its various spoken dialects; his knowledge of the myths and folk-lore of many nations, his ethnological studies, have equipped him peculiarly for the task of translator.

But he possesses a quality still more marked than any one of these: he is always in sympathy with his author, whose work he thoroughly loves and believes in. He endeavors always, where there is a choice of words, to give the strongest phrase, the one most adapted to translate just the shade of meaning he finds in the original; to give the reader of romance not merely a story, but some idea of the peculiar idiom of the Slavic tongue, and to preserve the individuality and color of the original. Sometimes it is well-nigh impossible to translate that idiom into equivalent English, and for that reason the translation often lacks the refined and attenuated nothingness of expression which for many readers seems inseparable from style. But it is this very vigorousness and glow of imagery, this at times barbaric splendor of metaphor, that can best render the original. An author who essays the calm and cold and merely polished forms of utterance should be translated in the same spirit; the author who writes at a white heat of thought and feeling needs a translator who can feel his mood.

If an unprejudiced reader would really judge for himself the merits of Mr. Curtin's translations, let him compare them with any translation which has appeared either in French or German. The French translations are mostly fragmentary. The German are still worse, being for the greater part so ponderously and laboriously dull that one questions at times whether

they are translations of Sienkiewicz ; for whatever literary sins may be charged to the author of "Quo Vadis," certainly dulness is not one of them.

It is impossible to turn from these translations and read one of Mr. Curtin's without feeling at once the difference. The American translator has somehow contrived to feel and to preserve for others the peculiar genius, spirit, individuality, of the original. Occasionally, perhaps, something of polished elegance is lost by this very fidelity of treatment, but the gain is greater than the loss.

He whose task is to carry to another's lips the golden goblet of genius, filled to overflowing, must indeed be cupbearer to the Gods if he never once spills a single drop !

The translator who attempts to interpret Henryk Sienkiewicz might indeed be pardoned if occasionally his work should lose something of the force and fire and exquisite beauty of the original ; but we believe that it has lost but little.

It is perhaps matter for pardonable pride that these translations are the work of an American, and offered for the first time to an American public ; for the fact is in itself a sign of that growing cosmopolitanism of spirit in the American commonwealth of letters, — that spirit which leads America to welcome most generously and gladly every great voice that greets her from across the seas, whether it come to us from England or France, Italy, Russia, or Poland.

And now to speak briefly of those facts in the life of Sienkiewicz which have direct bearing upon his art and genius.

He was born at Wola Okrejska in Lithuania, in 1845. He comes of an old and noble family, and his instincts and tastes have always been those of a patrician.

It will be remembered that Lithuania itself, though united with Poland since the fifteenth century, presented in some respects the characteristics of a distinct nationality, — a nationality even more interesting to the philologist than to the historian, because of its peculiar dialects, which present a more startling affinity to ancient Sanskrit than any other dialect known. It has scarcely any printed literature, but is rich in spoken dia-

lects, in fragments of song, elegies of rare beauty tinged with a melancholy at once chaste and tender and profound. The country stretching from the Baltic southward is a land of great and gloomy forests which have had not a little influence upon the people.

The land itself, its natural and strongly religious and political influences, its melancholy, have left their strong and lasting impression upon him. He has a passionate fondness for the Lithuanian, and paints him and his surroundings most lovingly.

If one would know with what wit and yet what tenderness Sienkiewicz understands his Lithuanian, he will turn to the pages of "Fire and Sword," and read the adventures of that valorous knight, Pan Longin Podbibienta, the Lithuanian Don Quixote, and follow him even through that last great scene at the siege of Zbaraj.

"He rose and passed on. Beyond the wagons there were either no pickets or few, easily avoided. Now heavier rain began to fall, pattering on the bushes and drowning the noise of his steps. Pan Longin then gave freedom to his long legs, and walked like a giant, trampling the bushes; every step was like five of a common man, the wagons every moment farther, the oak-grove every moment nearer, and salvation every moment nearer.

"Here are the oaks. Night beneath them is as black as under the ground. A gentle breeze sprang up; the oaks murmured lightly, — you would have said they were muttering a prayer: 'O great God, good God, guard this knight, for he is thy servant, and a faithful son of the land on which we have grown up for thy glory!'

"About seven miles and a half divided Pan Longin from the Polish camp. Sweat poured from his forehead, for the air was sultry, as if gathering for a storm; but he went on, caring nothing for the storm, for the angels were singing in his heart. The oaks became thinner. The first field is surely near. The oaks rustle more loudly, as if wishing to say, 'Wait; you are safe among us.' But the knight had no time, and he enters the open field. Only one oak stands on it, and that in the centre, but it is larger than the others. Pan Longin moves towards that oak. . . .

"The Tartars rushed on Pan Longin like wolves on a deer, and

seized him with their sinewy hands; but he only shook himself, and all the assailants fell from him as ripe fruit from a tree. Then the terrible double-handed sword gritted in the scabbard; and then were heard groans, howls, calls for aid, the whistle of the sword, the groans of the wounded, the neighing of the frightened horses, the clatter of broken Tartar swords. The silent field roared with all the wild sounds that can possibly find place in the throats of men. . . .

"Pan Longin saw that the moment of his death was at hand, and he began the litany to the Most Holy Lady.

"It became still. The crowds restrained their breath, waiting for what would happen. The first arrow whistled as Pan Longin was saying 'Mother of the Redeemer!' and it scratched his temple. Another arrow whistled as he was saying 'O glorious Lady,' and it stuck in his shoulder. The words of the Litany had mingled with the whistling of arrows; and when Pan Longin had said 'Morning Star,' arrows were standing in his shoulders, in his side, in his legs. The blood from his temples was flowing into his eyes; he saw as through a mist the field and the Tartars; he heard no longer the whistle of the arrows. He felt that he was weakening; that his legs were bending under him; his head dropped on his breast. At last he fell on his knees. Then he said with a half-groan: 'Queen of the Angels —' These words were his last on earth. The angels of Heaven took his soul and placed it as a clear pearl at the feet of the 'Queen of the Angels.'"

It is impossible for words to describe the indefinable and lasting impression that chapter, quoted only in part, leaves upon the reader, with its intense realism, its power of condensation, and that dominant note heard above all the minor music, the note of triumph and exaltation!

The student-days of Sienkiewicz were passed at the University of Warsaw, and it would be interesting to learn from his own lips how the life of that city impressed him, when he entered its university, a mere youth. For it will be remembered that those days were troublous ones. It was a disastrous, critical period in the history of Poland; and inseparable from that history was the city of Warsaw itself, which had been identified with nearly every national movement against Russia. Against this rebellious city the strongest and severest measures had been adopted for the denationalization of the Pole. Even the

use of his native tongue was forbidden at the University. Russians superseded Poles; the old relations between the University and the aristocracy were interrupted. There was an atmosphere of suspicion which every one felt. For the year 1863 marked that Reign of Terror which did not end for Poland until much blood had been shed, and fortunes lost, and endless banishments compelled the Pole to admit the superiority of Russia. Peace was restored, but it was the peace of death that descended upon the unhappy country.

In an early story of student life at Kieff, Sienkiewicz presents a picture of student days in a Polish-Russian university, which is interesting chiefly because of the striking contrasts it presents to college life elsewhere. The attitude of the author toward this earlier work of his is characteristic of the man. He does not desire that it should be translated, or offered to an American public, because he does not consider it his best work.

When he was twenty-two, after he had left the University, began those wanderings which have influenced not a little his work and genius, — that restlessness, and desire for strange scenes and faces, and a thoroughly nomadic life. This gypsy-life was the very tonic most needed for his genius. It must be remembered that between the Polish aristocrat and the mere bourgeois or peasant is a gulf so profound and fixed that each class is comparatively ignorant of the other. Sienkiewicz has lived among both classes. In his wanderings there is scarcely a corner of Poland that he has not explored.

The various social strata of his country; the marked contrast between the simplicity of that life and the culture of the ecclesiastic and aristocratic bodies; the religious, poetic, artistic temperament of the people, — none of these escape him. His sympathies and affiliations belong to no one class. If he depicts the Polish patrician, you feel sure that the picture is vivid and real. But the picture is none the less vivid if he describes to you the little, starved, stunted peasant, Yanko the Musician, with a soul too big for his battered and beaten body.

The intense tenderness of his sympathy with life, whether it be of the palace or of the hovel, is one of the strongest charac-

teristics of Sienkiewicz. His own wandering life has contributed not a little to this breadth of feeling. He has known material need. ✓

His wanderings did not prevent occasional essays in the field of literature ; in 1872 appeared a volume of sketches from his pen, in the vein of Auerbach, but with a power of satire which the latter does not possess.

Later we hear of Sienkiewicz editing a journal in St. Petersburg. Whether this enterprise proved disastrous or not, we do not know ; possibly life in the capital city of the Czar did not appeal to the Pole. We next hear of him in France.

In 1877 a scheme fathered by a Polish fraternity of expatriated artists and musicians took definite shape. The project was first discussed in Paris. Its object was no less than to establish in America a Polish Commonwealth and home for denationalized genius.

The fraternity, which was at last reduced to a mere handful of enthusiasts, set sail from Havre. Among their number were Count Bozenta Chlaponski, his wife Helena Modjeska, and Sienkiewicz. Thus the scene of his Homeric wanderings was transferred to America, and he appeared upon the Pacific coast, unheralded, unknown, yet one of the founders of a scheme as interesting as that transcendental one of the Brook Farm visionaries which has always fascinated Americans, because, while a part of our life, it has seemed so remote from it.

This fraternity of Polish artists desired to found not merely Utopia, but Arcadia as well. They settled near Los Angeles, and called their settlement Anno Luni.

Against what rocks the enterprise foundered we know not, but financially and in other ways it proved a failure, and our artists found themselves, if not in as dire straits as the fraternity of *La Vie de Bohème*, at least in circumstances which it required heroic energies to face.

Little did Sienkiewicz realize, in 1877, what a home for Polish genius America would prove twenty years later, and that in the Mercantile Library of the most cosmopolitan city in America seventy-five copies of a work of his would prove

insufficient to satisfy the demand in a single quarter of that city.

The failure of the Polish colony proved in the long run productive of greater results than its success would have accomplished. Modjeska turned her attention to the study of English, and made her American début in "*Adrienne Lecouvreur*" in San Francisco. Sienkiewicz embodied his experiences and impressions of America in a series of papers which were published in Warsaw, and attracted the attention of the Polish public towards their author.)

He returned to Poland, where he has continued to reside a portion of the year, although much of his time is still spent in travel. His wife died while still young, and the loss was a terrible one to him. He has two children, Henryk, a boy of fifteen, and Yadviga, a maid of thirteen.

Sienkiewicz is somewhat reserved and uncommunicative to strangers, but his voice expresses the deepest tenderness, and his face brightens when he speaks of his children.

In 1880 began that undertaking which has made him a household name in Poland,—the publishing of "*Fire and Sword*," "*The Deluge*," and "*Pan Michael*." They were first given to the world in a Warsaw journal, translations appearing simultaneously at Vienna and Berlin. For eight years, we are told, the writer was at work upon them. One cannot restrain a smile. Imagine an American public waiting eight years for the completion of a work!

Sienkiewicz is an incessant and tireless worker. It is scarcely possible even to enumerate the various writings which have come from his pen. In America have appeared already, besides the *Trilogy*, "*Without Dogma*," "*Children of the Soil*," "*Quo Vadis*," and two volumes of short stories. Another volume, "*Hania*," has been recently translated by Mr. Curtin; in addition to these mentioned are numerous publications which have been translated into German, Russian, French,—contributions to journalistic literature, impressions of travel in various countries, etc.

Warsaw, the scene of his student life, remains his favorite

city when at home, and there he spends the winter months. He writes for several papers there. His summers are spent in wandering, but a portion of the season is passed in the Carpathian Mountains, where he has a summer home.

But wherever he makes his temporary abode he is a citizen of the world, equally at home on the banks of the Tiber or the Seine, on the banks of the Dnieper or beside the Nile.

Yet he is intensely Polish in taste, pride, and tender patriotism. This unique combination, the love of country mingled with the breadth of the true cosmopolitan, the reverence of the past mingled with a hope almost prophetic for the future, — these are the qualities which make his contributions to literature of deep and permanent value. And to understand this thoroughly we must remember those social and race conditions which have developed life and art among the Poles.

The culmination of the long struggle which finally brought to pass the dismemberment of Poland has left its inevitable impress upon the people.

The history of this nation presents a peculiar anomaly, as strange as pathetic. Capable individually of the greatest things, brilliant in intellect and temperament, full of splendid and fitful energy at times, yet the Poles seem incapable of a series of concerted actions; and, one time the dominant people among the Slavic nation, by a series of disastrous campaigns they have been overthrown as a race. The cause is easy to discover. The problems of modern statesmanship as recognized by the German or Russian have never been solved by them. A number of violent and jealous princes, each scheming to overthrow the other; a nobility incapable of harmonizing at the critical epoch; a peasantry fearing slavishly its rulers, but without love for them, — the Jews, to a certain extent foreigners and aliens in the country, acting as middlemen and intermediaries between these two classes, despising both and recognizing the weak features of both, — it would require a greater genius than has yet appeared to coalesce such hostile elements as these.

Yet, in spite of the seeming indifference of the race to the

first conditions of national polity, the culmination of events which finally brought to pass the dismemberment of Poland, has left its impress upon the people.

Yet, as the translator of "With Fire and Sword" tells us, "there is probably no more striking antithesis than the Poles as individuals and the Poles as people." And although these geographic and political boundaries have disappeared, and the unhappy commonwealth has been absorbed politically by other nations, the peculiar genius and nationality of the people cannot at once assimilate with the Russian.

What must be the modern attitude of an enlightened patriot, a Polish man of letters towards the present? One of profound sadness. If he desires to glorify his nation, the sources of his inspiration must be her past. The English, French, or American writer of to-day writes for a public which has a certain faith in its own destiny and future; but the Pole speaks to a conquered nation, and therefore he must appeal to a larger public, — he cannot remain merely a Pole.

The bourgeois writer of fiction is satisfied to write of scenes and things local and temporary, because he is content with them; but the expatriated Pole, the Man without a Country, is compelled perforce to become a citizen of the world. He cannot find at home or in the present his chief sources of inspiration.

This perhaps accounts for the literary excursions of Sienkiewicz, and for the *modus operandi* of his work.

If he writes an historical romance, he must return to the past for his inspiration, to an age when Poland was still a mighty nation among nations. If he writes of modern Poland, it is the social, the artistic, or the individual problem he presents.

(Let us turn to the Trilogy, which in Poland at least is considered his greatest work. It is, first and last, Polish in sentiment, nationality, and patriotism. What Wagner has done for Germany in music, what Dumas did for France, and Scott for all English-speaking people, the Pole has achieved for his country in literature.)

The background against which these pictures paint themselves reminds us not a little of Verestchagin, — the same deep feeling for nature, and a certain sadness that seems inseparable from the Russian and the Lithuanian temperament, tears following closely upon mirth. It would be difficult to imagine a more powerful plea for peace than that which speaks to us from the pages of "Fire and Sword."

This first novel of the series describes the Cossack invasion of the Polish Commonwealth under Helmnitski, 1647–1651. The novel ends with the description of the siege of Zbaraj; an epilogue relates briefly the story of the battle of Berestechko, the triumph of the Poles, and the overthrow of Helmnitski.

"The Deluge" opens with the year 1655, and deals mainly with the events of the Swedish invasion of Poland. Peace was concluded in 1657. "The Deluge" ends with the expulsion of the Swedes from the Polish Commonwealth.

In "Pan Michael" we have the events of the Turkish Invasion of Poland, terminating with the siege of Kamenyets: the Epilogue narrates subsequent events, the battle of Hotin, 1674, and the final triumph of Poland under Sobieski.

These, in brief, are the themes of the series, but interwoven with these are others impossible to detail or even mention here.

To attempt to give in a few words any idea of this wonderful work is impossible; reading alone can do that. The dimensions of the background against which these figures paint themselves is the first characteristic that strikes the reader. The work is constructed upon the heroic plan.

Mingled with this breadth and boldness of background is a faithfulness even in the minutest details of action. The narrative is brilliant, graphic, incisive, the interest sustained unto the last. The dialogue never halts. Wit, tenderness, pathos, speak to us from every page, making the work a supreme miracle of genius. The dramatic and the æsthetic sense blend in an intense, vital realism, — not that of the morgue or the dissecting-table, but the deep, abiding realism of the ever-human!)

There are utterances and incidents in this work as dramatic as Shakespeare himself.

The genius stamped upon the Trilogy is profoundly original, never merely imitative. All the forces of nature have helped to make it what it is. Fire, feeling, large humor, profound pathos, a deep reverence for the forms and spirit of true religion, — these are but a few of the most striking characteristics of this work.

Perhaps no quality in these novels impresses us more than those marvellous descriptions of action, of conflict. Let the reader turn to the description of the siege of Zbaraj. In swift lightning flashes, scene after scene, incident upon incident, is depicted. The swing, the onward sweep, the rhythm of the whole is indescribable. It reminds one of passages of the Old Testament in its poetic fire, its absolute literalness.

The warriors fight, love, hate; they embrace each other; they laugh; they weep in each other's arms; give each other sage counsel with elemental, truly Homeric simplicity. They are deep versed in stratagems of love and war, — these knights of the seventeenth century. They have their Nestor, their Agamemnon, their great Achilles sulking in his tent. Sometimes, in spite of their Polish titles and faces, and a tenderness of nature almost feminine, they remind us of the good stout Saxons Shakespeare knew; especially where Zagloba relates his heroic deeds, there is a deliciously Falstaffian strut in the performance, and there runs riot a Falstaffian imagination truly sublime.

A vast, moving panorama is spread before us; across it pass mighty armies; hetman and banneret go by, and Polish women with white souls, and fair, flowerlike faces. The scene is full of stir, life, action; it is constantly changing, so that at times we are almost bewildered, attempting to follow the quick succession of events. We are transported in a moment from the din and uproar of a beleaguered town to the awful solitude of the vast steppes; yet it is always the Polish Commonwealth that the novelist paints for us, and beneath every other music rises the wild Slavic music, rude, rhythmical, and sad.

In "Without Dogma"¹ is presented quite another theme, treated in a fashion strikingly different. Leon Ploszowski belongs unmistakably to our own times. His doubts and diletanteism are our own. His fine æsthetic sense, his pessimism, his self-probings and weariness, his overstrung nerves, his whole philosophy of negation, — these are qualities belonging to this century, the outcome of our own age and culture.

The character of the woman stands out in splendid contrast to the man's. Its simplicity, strength, truth, and faith are the antidote for his doubt and weakness. Her very weakness becomes her strength. Dogma and action, not doubt and inactivity, can save a soul. In "Quo Vadis" we have the Christian maiden of the first century, triumphant in her faith, dwelling even in the very House of Cæsar, unsullied, untouched by the shamelessness of pagan Rome.

In "Without Dogma" we have the modern Christian woman as she relates herself to the most vital questions of the day; against this woman and her healthy dogmatic faith, arguments, sophistries, pessimism, and unbelief are powerless; she endures a thousand martyrdoms; her heart is torn by conflicting emotions; she loves, suffers, dies. But Sienkiewicz bids us believe that whatever the emergency, her conscience is an unerring light. Her faith and constancy never waver.

In "Children of the Soil"² we have a very modern study, and the social problem strongly stated. The main questions the writer presents, briefly stated, are these: Granted that there are secret forces of evil at work within modern society, forces tending towards its disintegration, how combat them? What is the ultimate safeguard and hope of society itself?

Sienkiewicz answers both questions in his own fashion, and according to his deepest conviction and faith. He believes that purity has a stronger, more lasting sway over men's souls than vice, and

¹ "Without Dogma." A Novel of Modern Poland. By Henryk Sienkiewicz. Translated from the Polish by Iza Young. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company.

² "Children of the Soil." By Henryk Sienkiewicz. Translated from the Polish by Jeremiah Curtin. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company.

“If Virtue feeble were
Heaven itself would stoop to her!”

One word regarding the characters of Sienkiewicz. They have the divine breath of life in them. Whether he describes elemental natures, or the fine product of our nineteenth-century complex culture and civilization, his men and women live, speak, and act. They have souls as well as bodies. Their moods are akin to our own.

A last word concerning the women of Henryk Sienkiewicz. We know of no one, except perhaps Shakespeare or Goethe, who has drawn so many and such varying types; and we know of no one, except Shakespeare, who in his delineation of woman has so deeply fathomed her soul, — sounded her human heart and its mystery.

This is a quality in an author which cannot soon be forgotten. There is only one type of woman our author eschews, or, if he describes her at all, does so from a standpoint which leaves no doubt as to his own convictions.

The type of femininity which appeals most strongly to the writers of the Decadence is the only type which he describes but rarely; and when he does no glamour lingers about the picture, it is no “Tragic Idyll” he depicts.

The woman Henryk Sienkiewicz loves to depict is she who loves, who blesses, who gathers her children about her fireside, — who wedded retains her virginal purity of soul. Of him may be said what Pierre Loti says of his hero’s love for the only incomparable woman, “Il adorait le je ne sais quoi qui était en elle, qui était son âme!” (“In her he adored that inexpressible Something — her soul!”)

No greater tribute can be paid him than to remember the tribute his genius has paid true womanhood. The creator of Panna Olenka, of Aniela, of Basia, may certainly clasp hands across the centuries with him who gave us Imogen and Beatrice and Rosalind!

OPINIONS
OF
CRITICS AND WRITERS
ON
THE NOVELS OF SIENKIEWICZ
AND
MR. CURTIN'S TRANSLATIONS.



"Quo Vadis."

"Of intense interest to the whole Christian civilization. — Chicago Tribune.

"QUO VADIS." A Narrative of the Time of Nero. By HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ, author of "With Fire and Sword," "The Deluge," etc. Translated from the Polish by JEREMIAH CURTIN. Crown 8vo. Cloth, \$2.00.

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In all respects a surpassing work of fiction. — *New York Herald*.

His understanding of the Roman heart is marvellous. — *Boston Transcript*.

One of the strongest historical romances that have been written in the last half century. — *Chicago Evening Post*.

Absorbingly interesting, brilliant in style, imposing in materials, and masterly in their handling. — *Providence News*.

The portrait of Petronius is alone a masterpiece of which the greatest word-painters of any age might be proud. — *Philadelphia Church Standard*.

A book to which no review can do justice. A most noble historical romance, in which the reader never for a moment loses interest. — *Detroit Free Press*.

One of the most remarkable books of the decade. It burns upon the brain the struggles and triumphs of the early Church. — *Boston Daily Advertiser*.

With him we view, appalled, Rome, grand and awful, in her last throes. The picture of the giant Ursus struggling with the wild animals is one that will always hold place with such literary triumphs as that of the chariot race in "Ben Hur." — *Boston Courier*.

The world needs such a book at intervals, to remind it again of the surpassing power and beauty of Christ's central idea. . . . A climax [the scene in the arena] *beside which the famous chariot race in "Ben Hur" seems tame.* — *Chicago Tribune*.

Every chapter in it is eloquent with meaning. . . . The feasting at the imperial palace, the contests in the arena, the burning of Rome, the rescue of Lygia, the Christian maiden, — will hold their place in memory with unfading color, and are to be reckoned among the significant triumphs of narrative art. — *The Boston Beacon*.

Without exaggeration it may be said that this is a great novel. It will become recognized by virtue of its own merits as the one heroic monument built by the modern novelist above the ruins of decadent Rome, and in honor of the blessed martyrs of the early Church. There are chapters in "Quo Vadis" so convincing, so vital, so absolute, that by comparison Lew. Wallace's popular book seems tinsel, while Ware's honest old "Aurelian" sinks into insignificance. — *Brooklyn Eagle*.

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The only modern romance with which it can be compared for fire, sprightliness, rapidity of action, swift changes, and absorbing interest is "The Three Musketeers" of Dumas. — New York Tribune.

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The force of the work recalls certain elements of Wallenstein. — Boston Journal.

The first of Polish novelists, past or present, and second to none now living in England, France, or Germany. — Blackwood's Magazine.

He exhibits the sustained power and sweep of narrative of Walter Scott and the humor of Cervantes. — Philadelphia Inquirer.

The word painting is startlingly like some of the awesome paintings by Verestchagin. We do not feel over bold in saying that some of the character-drawing is Shakespearian. Where, outside of Shakespeare, can such a man as Zagloba be found? — Christian Advocate.

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It even surpasses in interest and power the same author's romance "With Fire and Sword." . . . *The whole story swarms with brilliant pictures of war, and with personal episodes of battle and adventure.*—New York Tribune.

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I admire not only the sincere conscientiousness and accuracy, but also the skill, with which you did the work.

Your countrymen will establish your merit better than I; as to me, I can only desire that you and no one else should translate all that I write.

With respect and friendship,

HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ.

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and
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Mr. Curtin has done the translation so well that the peculiarities of the author's style have been preserved with great distinctness. — *Detroit Tribune*.

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No brain and hand were better fitted by nature and wide experience to assume the task of reanimating the work of Sienkiewicz into English than those of Mr. Curtin. A cosmopolite, but few countries in the world have escaped a prolonged visit by him, and indeed he is the complete and thorough master of seven languages. Thus equipped, and unexcelled as a linguist and man of letters, he has given us the unsurpassed translation of “*With Fire and Sword*,” “*The Deluge*,” “*Pan Michael*,” and the lesser romances of Henryk Sienkiewicz and now the supreme effort, “*Quo Vadis*,” a tragic romance of the unspeakable days of the Roman Empire under the terrible Nero. Here is a translation indeed ! — *Boston Courier*.

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THE PUNISHMENT OF CHILO BY VINICIUS.
NERO HOLDING A GOLDEN LUTE, WITH ROME IN FLAMES.
"PERACTUM EST!"
THE CONVERSION OF CHILO.
"QUO VADIS, DOMINE!"

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PETRONIUS CALMING THE PEOPLE.
THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN URSUS AND THE BULL.

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"CROWDS OF PEOPLE FLOWED PAST."
POPPÆA'S MEETING WITH LYGIA IN NERO'S GARDEN.
EUNICE AND IRAS POURING WINE IN THE HOUSE OF PETRONIUS.
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